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JACK ANDERSON

Psychic Studies Might Help U.S. Explore Soviets

U.S. intelligence agencies won't talk about it, but they are rushing to catch up with the Soviet Union in what one scientist jocularly calls "the race for inner space"—psychic research.

Parapsychology is a field so full of pseudo-scientists, flakes and outright charlatans that it's easy to debunk the whole idea as a comic-strip concept unworthy of serious scientific study.

In 1981, when I first began reporting on secret U.S. and Soviet programs using so-called psychics to gather intelligence, some of the government-funded projects were obviously off-the-wall. There was the "hyperspatial nuclear howitzer" that would "transmit" a bomb explosion from the Nevada desert to downtown Moscow with the speed of thought, or the "anti-missile time warp" that would send an incoming enemy missile into the past, blowing up dinosaurs instead of 20th century Americans.

But there are legitimate laboratory projects that may eventually unlock the mysteries of the human

mind. One of the most promising is the testing of "remote viewing"—the claimed ability of some psychics to describe scenes thousands of miles away.

The CIA and the Pentagon have an obvious interest in this phenomenon. If they could get psychics to throw their minds behind the Iron Curtain, there'd be no need to risk the lives of human agents.

The CIA sent representatives to a parapsychology conference in Virginia last December. Besides the usual spoon-bending—which professional magicians have denounced as a fairly simple trick—there was serious discussion of remote viewing. In fact, the CIA is now seriously pondering the possibility of raising "psychic shields" to keep Soviet remote viewers away from our secrets.

I asked my skeptical associates Dale Van Atta and Joseph Spear to find out how remote viewing has become almost universally accepted in the intelligence community. They gained access to top-secret briefings on the subject. This is what they learned:

The CIA's latest remote viewing project was code-named "Grill Flame," and was carried out in part by two respected academics: Harold Puthoff, formerly with the National Security Agency, and Russell Targ, formerly with the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif.

Puthoff and Targ conducted at

least two tests that produced astonishing results. They gave one psychic the latitude and longitude of a remote location and told him to project his mind there and describe the scene. He described an airfield, complete with details—including a large gantry and crane at one end of the field.

The CIA was impressed, but critical. There was indeed an airfield at the map coordinates the psychic had been given. The site was the Soviet ultra-secret nuclear testing area at Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan. But there was no gantry or crane there.

Still, it had been a while since U.S. spy satellites had taken pictures of the Semipalatinsk base. So the CIA waited for the next set of photos—and sure enough, there was the gantry and crane, just as the psychic had described them. No one in U.S. intelligence agencies had known the equipment was there, so the information couldn't have been leaked to him.

The second test involved a Soviet TU95 "Backfire" bomber, which the CIA knew had crashed somewhere in Africa. They were eager to find it before the Soviets did, so they could take photographs and perhaps purloin secret gear from the wreckage.

So one of Project Grill Flame's remote viewers was asked to locate the downed bomber. He gave the CIA the location within several miles.

HANK KETCHAM